583x of our peoples. Its pure and simple abolition would upset their estab-
182 lished order completely. First their mentality has to change, and that end can be accomplished only gradually, since a moral change is involved. And the present state of these peoples is not sufficiently evolved for the abolition of the bride price to be beneficial. Here, if ever, the axiom: nihil leges sine moribus is valid.

000 But what might perhaps be done in that direction now is to place a limitation on the amount of the bride price. This measure should be strictly enforced to make sure that it is carried out -- although in practice its enforcement would be very difficult, for at the beginning [180], many interested parties would try to circumvent it. If good results are to be obtained, an efficacious repression of adultery and the frequency of divorce should accompany the limitation on the bride price. It would be a first step towards the ideal. Others could follow according to the extent of the natives' evolution toward a higher level of morality.

Apropos of these considerations we should like to say a few words concerning:

583x 3. Traffic in bride prices
177

This term may be taken to mean two different things. It may be used to refer to a general increase in the amount of the bride price, which has reached enormous proportions since the European penetration of the area. Or it may refer to the increase in the bride price of a single woman for successive marriages, from which her family profits.

The first meaning of the term refers to a fact, namely that the amount of the bride price has increased considerably. The reason for this development is the increase in material wealth resulting from colonization. Riches are more easily acquired. But we should not exclude the role of the greed of many parents, which has also increased. It is the most important and can reach scandalous proportions in areas where the bride price is paid in European goods (money, fabrics, appliances, utensils); in such regions, as for
177 example among the riverain people of the Lower Congo, it goes up
583x to and easily exceeds 2,000 francs. Think of what this amount
465 represents, especially in times of economic depression. (1)
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1. For the sake of comparison, here are some average figures for 1934:

589X
177
[465]
[435]

Wages	fr. 20.00 to 25.00
Copal, per kilogram . . .	0.50 to 0.70
Palmettos	0.10 to 0.20
Palm nuts	0.05 to 0.10

Inevitably the action of one man leads another to follow suit for -- need I repeat? -- everything is interdependent.

Another reason may be, and sometimes is, involved. It is the desire [181] of a husband to bind a woman more securely to him by paying a lot for her. This is certainly a praiseworthy feeling, especially considering the women's readiness to resort to divorce. Its practice, however, is full of dangers. If it is limited to an isolated case, that is, to a single monogamist who gives his entire fortune for his only wife, the danger is minimal. Such is the case of one of our catechists who paid an enormous amount, without its having the slightest repercussion on his region. But the danger is very great if a man does this to establish a harem, especially if for that purpose he entices the wives of others. Thus, for instance, a man to whom the administration gave great political powers caused a fantastic increase in the general bride price among the Ekonda of the north. (1)

1. One factor which helped increase the bride price among the Wangata and other tribes in the vicinity of Coquilhatville has been described by Father Kaptein in Congo, 1922, Vol. 1, p. 544. Since his study is written in Dutch, I think it would be useful if I translated the whole text here:

"When the first Europeans arrived at Leopoldville and Brazzaville, fabrics and other European articles soon made their appearance in Coquilhatville. The chiefs Yoma of Boyeka, Ibuka of Boyere (Boyela), Yamba of Eala; Nkake of Bokele, etc., went up the Tshuapa and Ikelemba rivers and, by means of these goods, bought slaves, women, and ivory.

463 Division of labor is unknown, and each person works entirely on his own, without the help of a middleman. There are no laborers [177] and certainly no artisans unless there happens to be some artisan or other who learned his trade under the government or at one or other of the Mission posts and has returned to his village after having completed his contract.

As a rule, such people do not find sufficient work in their own villages, and, as they are usually in possession of a few boxes, clothes, and pots and pans which they have acquired with the savings of their monthly salary, they play the grand gentleman in their village until their goods and chattels have been used up and worn out.

"Njolemwa Bosala," he says, "I am tired of work." "Njowa l'ompele," "I am dying of the heavy, difficult work."

Several of them there return to one or the other of the centers of the White settlers and again offer themselves as craftsmen.

554 A good craftsman has a high reputation among the natives, and his social position is even a very good one for a Negro. He is able regularly to supply food for his wife and children and also to get himself clothes.

326 Although most Negroes work individually, this is not true of the smith who has to have helpers in order to do his job.

465 Since the Mongo Negro knows nothing of wages, his helpers get 436 part of the income, consisting of mitako [a kind of metal currency] or some part of the work that has been done, either a knife or a lance, or a foot or arm ring.

I. THE SMITH'S TRADE.

326 554 Of the various industrial trades, that of the smith is certainly the first in rank. The smith is one of the leading people [94] in the village and one of the inevitable persons to have a decisive voice in village affairs whether in settling differences or in meetings.

In fact, the smith is the only one of the Mongo Negroes who works regularly and does not rest on his oars. From what he earns he is able to buy quite a number of wives, and he is regarded as one of the village heads whose wishes must be consulted.

000 [547] Unfortunately the system was not continued. Also, it must not be said that it would be unjust to lower the price of the women. Rather, injustice would thus be redressed, a degenerate custom be improved. Through the present system, ever more injustice is committed and suffered.

583 595 A few polygynists would suffer some material loss through the lowering of the price of the women, namely, by receiving less for one woman than they (sometimes) paid for them, for they inherited most of the women. But they are also the ones who are responsible for the irregular situation. In a large part of the district, the polygynists are by far the minority of the population. They are the ones who are hostile to the Colonial Administration. They are in possession of the women and have a monopoly on them. They fix prices which a young man can almost never pay, namely, two nkesi at least.

583 The difficulties for Christian marriages become daily still more difficult. This is true for the marriages already entered into and for the future marriages.

583 428 426 [465 511] The bride price to be paid for the wife ought to be such that every young man can pay that sum with his own money, with the money that he has earned himself by his work. This sum cannot be high, for the ordinary working man in the Congo, who makes up the large part of the population, does not earn much more than what he needs for board and clothing. Therefore to pay an excessively large sum as a bride price forces him to borrow and to run up debts among his relatives and friends. The result of this is that the system of the Nkita goes over unnoticed into the Christian marriages, and the woman remains an object for inheritance. Indeed, when the man dies the creditors will come, namely, those who have loaned him money -- and demand the wife. The disputes over the bride price then begin anew, and they will again give the wife in marriage in return for a new bride price. Thus, there is no end to it. The wife, the mother, will never achieve any rights but will always remain an object of inheritance. There has been talk about declaring the widow free at the death of her husband in order to prevent the inheriting of wives, but how will it be possible to [548] achieve that if the bride price is not lessened, considerably lessened? When a